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ABSTRACT

Brief notices of topics arising during the preceding four months from the Center's continuing program of work on behalf of Member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) are given in this news-sheet. CERI's interest and activity focus on three areas: 1) Research into the relations between education and society to arrive at strategies that take account of the qualitative and quantitative aspects of growth in the 1970's; 2) the development and exchange of innovations in the teaching learning process; and 3) the strengthening of national and international arrangements for educational innovation. This issue contains four articles; a discussion on a recent CERI publication entitled "Styles of Curriculum Development"; a report on a conference held at Allerton Park, Monticello, Illinois; a list of OECD sales agents depositaires des publications de l'OECD; and a list of CERI Publications and Technical Reports 1970-72. The four articles describe CERI's current programs concerning school-community interaction; health education and its relationship to health care programs; a training seminar for curriculum developers in Spain; and the school's capacity to sustain innovation. Those interested in receiving the newsletter should have their name added to the mailing list. (SJM)

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INNOVATION IN EDUCATION

NEWS FROM THE CENTRE FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND INNOVATION OECD PARIS

3

JANUARY 1973

This news-sheet gives brief notice to topics arising during the preceding four months from CERI's continuing programme of work on behalf of Member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Enquiries for further information should be addressed to the Director, CERI/OECD, 2 rue André-Pascal, 75775 Paris CEDEX 16, or as may be indicated in the text. Editors are welcome to use any of this material provided the source is acknowledged.

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The School and the Community

One possible means of "reforming" schools to which increasing attention is being paid in many countries is closer integration between them and community. This is an idea that is spreading rapidly although very often in differing form and for differing purposes. It tends to be seen as a panacea both for existing ills in public school systems – whether economic, social, or educational – as well as for some potentially difficult situations such as those caused by a raising of the school leaving age. More to the point, it is a phenomenon that has been, so far, the subject of very little rigorous thought.

CERI's involvement in this subject has grown over the past year and is currently being concentrated on a survey of some delimitable forms of school-community interaction, their purpose, nature, operation, achievements (or lack of them), problems and perceived solutions to them. This is not scientific research in the sense of setting out to prove or disprove a theory but rather the gathering of data about a phenomenon that exists, and its organisation into a form of use to educational practitioners who are involved in innovation of this particular sort. This information is intended to provide the basis of a publication that will delineate for practitioners what effects can reasonably be expected to result from what forms of interaction, what problems are likely to arise along the way and what are seen as possible solutions.

The systematic use of the community as a learning resource for the school is one area of interest. This includes questions of work experience and specific relations with industry. The school's role as a focal point in community development is also being examined, in both decaying urban communities and "new" communities created for a specific purpose. A third area being covered is "institutional blending" either by combining a number of resources under one roof or by completely decentralising school facilities into an existing environment.

Some of the related issues that have emerged include the question of the selection and (more important) training of personnel required to work in new situations – people from a variety of backgrounds who "teach" in their areas of expertise without benefit of formal teacher training, or are not accustomed to working with children or with mixed age group populations. Another problem is evaluation: very often objectives of school-community interaction programmes are not clearly stated at the outset and, even when stated, tend to be of a social nature not easy to assess. An always present background issue turns on whether close involvement of a school with its environment is necessarily a good thing. What if the environment is one of limited or dubious resources?

Although no definite answers are possible to any of these questions, the way they are viewed in different settings is being examined and will be included in the publication, thereby providing the background against which more informed discussion can take place later to derive the general implications of the practices described, suggest new developments in them and propose areas for further study. Another possible second stage of the project is the establishment of informal networks of schools operating under similar circumstances in different countries for purposes of co-operative research and the sharing of findings.

Health Education and its relationship to Health Care Systems

With the support of a grant from the Josiah Macy Foundation, the Centre has launched an exploration of the national systems for educating those destined for the health professions. Initially, this exploration will be a brief one, with three objectives:

- Determining the degree to which the educational systems are congruent with the needs of national systems for health care.
- Identifying innovative educational programmes geared to improving the quality and amount of care provided to patients by the various health professions (e.g. medicine, nursing, dentistry, physiotherapy).
- Determining whether or not international cooperation would be helpful in the general advance of health education in OECD Member countries.

The background to this project lies clearly in the dramatic changes now under way or planned in the health care systems of many countries. Medical advances, longer life expectancy and society's pursuit of an improved quality of life have imposed unprecedented demands on these systems. As a result, educational programmes for the

health professions are being called upon to expand in size, to develop new types of personnel and to reorganize their curricula so as to include more social science material and better preparation for inter-disciplinary activity.

The various national education systems have adopted a wide range of techniques within their schools of medicine, dentistry, nursing and so on to deal with these new problems and it will be the task of the CERI project to document these efforts and view them in the perspective of international planning.

In this undertaking the Centre will be guided by a group of distinguished experts from a number of OECD countries and will benefit also from the results of other OECD programmes and from liaison with the World Health Organisation. Field studies will occupy the first six months of 1973. A report with recommendations may be expected before the end of the year.

A Training Seminar for Curriculum Developers in Spain

In our first issue, notice was given of this seminar, which was held in the Polytechnical University, Valencia in May/June. The Spanish Ministry of Education had asked the Centre to assist in the arrangements for this event, bringing to bear experience gained from its previous Curriculum Development seminar held in Norwich (U.K.) in 1971. The Shell Company in Spain gave valuable financial support.

While the staff for this second seminar in the series was drawn from several countries, the 50 participants were all Spanish and included teachers, teacher educators and inspectors. During their fortnight of intensive work they explored some of the problems of implementing the recent Spanish school reform. The theme of the seminar was the design of learning situations for 11 to 14 year old children in the second stage of the new basic school, a common school which incorporates part of the old stratified secondary system. This was discussed against a background of international experience and research in curriculum development, individualised learning and research design and evaluation.

The basic intention of the comprehensive law of 1970 introducing reform in education in Spain is to modernise the whole system, from pre-schooling to lifelong education and including all stages in between, both public and private. Modernisation means for the reformers not only the adoption of educational hardware and all the technical apparatus of planned, system-wide change ; it also means the use of schooling to produce a more democratic and a more equalitarian society.

It was apparent from the reports and recommendations for follow-up of the different groups in the Valencia seminar that it is not excessively difficult to apply specific techniques to curriculum development and the evaluation of pupil performance against agreed standards. What, like many others, however, they still found puzzling was how to provide, for a national system, those forms of school organisation and patterns of teacher-pupil relationship that will encourage less easily quantifiable qualities like individuality, creativity, cooperativeness and respect for the unique value of other persons. This probably is a reflection of the situation in their home country where, in spite of a shift from centralised control to more regional and local participation, class teaching remains dominant and curriculum outlines and approved texts are still issued from the centre, with the strong expectation that they will be followed in all aspects.

The next seminar in this series will be held in Portugal from 9th-20th April. It will attempt to assist the Portuguese with the problems they are encountering in the setting up of the proposed new higher teacher training institutions with particular reference to the staff that will run them. It will focus primarily on the place of curriculum development within the Portuguese educational system with emphasis on the role of the school and the effective use of multi-media systems such as educational T.V., already used there on a wide scale.

Seen together these seminars are an attempt to help teachers, inspectors and curriculum developers to share and exchange their problems in curriculum development and, through expertise provided by CERI, to focus on various solutions provided from different international perspectives.

The School's Capacity to sustain Innovation

An important project in CERI's current programme for strengthening national and international arrangements for educational innovation carries the title "Creativity of the School". This aims to produce recommendations that can make schools more innovative in the sense of strengthening their capacity to consider new practices at their proper value – whether they come from outside or are generated within. But a school should not be made more innovative merely in the sense of increasing the rate at which it can accept specific changes; it is much more important to build the capacity to respond to new situations into its existing organisation and to examine how the whole system of secondary education can be modified to deal with change. What is more, any assessment of a school's creativity with respect to change must have regard, not only to its capability of adopting or adapting new practices, but also to its capability of rejecting them when there is good reason to do so.

The first year's work on this project came up for assessment at a workshop with 60 participants from 17 countries at Estoril, Portugal from 21st to 25th November last year. To assist in this, presentations on special aspects were made by four experts and position papers were prepared by Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom and the United States. These will be included in the published report of the workshop; in the meantime a general indication of the ground covered may be of interest.

It was possible to identify many factors that might inhibit or encourage the creativity of a school. For practical convenience these were arranged in five clusters:

- the administrative relationships between the school and outside institutions;
- the internal organisation and social relationships within the school;

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the professional support given to the school from outside;

interventions for strengthening the school's creativity (especially in-service training and organisation development);

the influence of the school's environment (e.g. parents, employers, the community).

Factors in these clusters may, of course, be analysed singly; but if a school's capacity to deal with change is to be improved and sustained in a changing environment a knowledge of all factors and their inter-relationships is required. For example, it might seem at first sight that the creativity of a school would be strengthened by restructuring its relations with outside administrative influences so that teachers had a greater freedom to steer their own activities and there was greater discretion to transfer items from one financial account to another. This, however, would not automatically affect the behaviour of the school in dealing with new practices; other factors might still inhibit it, such as a negative attitude on the part of staff, extra work load, lack of time, inadequate professional support from outside or just a fundamental inability to exercise the new-found freedom. In short, a piecemeal approach to the problem of increasing creativity is inimical to success. A broad view, embracing the whole system, is what is needed.

As to topics for future international study in this context, the workshop gave particular priority to the following which are already receiving attention in the Centre:

- the internal organisation of the school: variations in structural designs in relation to functional criteria and the dynamics of change in structures;
- reward systems for teachers, (e.g. salary structures, career patterns, status);
- the role of established institutions (e.g. universities and pedagogical centres) in providing support for schools on a regional basis;
- the role of the inspectorate: its internal and external organisation, and especially the reconciliation of its advice and control functions;
- the allocation of financial resources and the public accountability of schools.

A RECENT CERI PUBLICATION

Styles of Curriculum Development. Report of a Conference held at Allerton Park, Monticello, Illinois, USA, 19-23 September, 1971, 72 pp. OECD, Paris, 1973.

This report should be seen within the framework of the Centre's whole programme on curriculum development. It follows most directly from the report entitled "The Nature of the Curriculum for the Eighties and Onwards" (noticed in our June 1972 issue) which gives an overview of the changes to which the school and the curriculum will be expected to respond in the coming years and how new curricula might best be developed in response to such pressures. In that report – and more especially at the conference that proceeded it – the need was voiced for more extensive thought to be given to the nature of curriculum development itself.

It was for this reason that a second conference was held in September 1971 at the University of Illinois, where an attempt was made to look at the problems of curriculum development by reference to the experiences of 39 people drawn from 11 OECD Member countries.

The word "style" in the title of the conference was chosen carefully – it did in fact replace the word "model" as it was believed that "style" was more suited to the somewhat amorphous nature of curriculum development than "model" with the precise and rigid definitions attendant on its use. As the author of this report points out, "curriculum development is not a cold, objective scientific exercise with right and wrong answers which can be, derived from research, but an expression of a whole range of social, political and pedagogical goals, like the rest of the educational process".

This latter point throws doubt on one broadly held view of curriculum development in educational circles today – that it is an orderly, well defined process with relatively few methods of organisation. But experience shows that, even if curriculum development is centrally organised, each project develops a life of its own, so there seem to be as many ways to go about it as there are projects.

Curriculum development is greatly influenced by the value assumptions of those involved in it. This is reflected in the kinds of projects that are funded – more often science and mathematics than anything else. Perhaps the most obvious value-loaded area has concerned the orientation the project developers themselves have brought to the development phase, as examplified by their attitude to objectives, evaluation, and who should be involved – whether respected experts, generalists or (more rarely) teachers.

Resistance is growing to curriculum developments that are handed down from above for consumption by teachers in schools. They are becoming swamped with projects and are no longer satisfied to be at the end of the production line – especially when there appears to be an assumption that they may not be doing their job well enough and curriculum developers know better. This, of course, is erroneous. Where curriculum development begins is a very sensitive issue and should be treated as such by all those who claim to know how change takes place. This report shows that there is no one way and, further, that the nature of the curriculum and its links with indigenous social systems are such that no one need fear – nor should anyone hope for – the emergence of an international technocracy of curricula development that would threaten the essential human relationship between the young person and the teacher who, after all, is the primary interpreter of adult society.

One of the main recommendations of the conference was that a handbook of Curriculum Development should be prepared on the basis of international cooperation under CERI's aegis. A more sensitive language of discourse is clearly needed if the value issues that permeate curriculum development are not to be obscured by a specious scientism. This "Handbook of Practical Guidelines" is by now well on the way to completion.

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